

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 AID-05 OMB-01 TRSE-00
AGRE-00 SS-15 SP-02 NSC-05 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00
L-03 /079 W

-----084051 031054Z /15

P 030430Z APR 78

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9163

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY

AMCONSUL UDORN

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 VIENTIANE 0405/1

BANGKOK ALSO PASS UDORN ELECTRICALLY

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAID US LA UNDP WFP

SUBJECT: THE LPDR MAY NOT NOW NEED US FOOD AID

REF A VIENTIANE 0340, B UDORN 0070 NOTAL

SUMMARY: UNDP FIGURES MADE AVAILABLE HERE IN VIENTIANE
INDICATE THAT NON-U.S. DONORS HAVE SUBSTANTIALLY MET
LAST JANUARY'S LAO EMERGENCY DROUGHT FOOD AID APPEAL.
ALTHOUGH THIS IS GOOD NEWS FROM THE HUMANITARIAN STAND-
POINT AND FROM THE STANDPOINT OF EASING CERTAIN PROBLEMS
IN WASHINGTON, IT CREATES DIFFICULTIES FOR OUR INDO-
CHINA NORMALIZATION POLICY. IN AN EFFORT TO COPE WITH
THESE PROBLEMS, WE RECOMMEND THAT WE AND EMBASSY ROME
BE AUTHORIZED TO SEEK A FORMAL JUDGMENT FROM UNDP/
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VIENTIANE AND WFP/ROME THAT THE LAO APPEAL IS NOW OBE.
WE WOULD THEN CONSULT WITH THE LAO FOREIGN MINISTRY AND
SEEK THEIR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT THAT THERE IS NO LONGER ANY
NEED FOR THE U.S. TO CONTINUE CONSIDERING THE LAO
EMERGENCY AID APPEAL. END SUMMARY.

1. THE UNDP RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE TOLD US MARCH 29

THAT AS OF APRIL 1, 1978, HIS OFFICE WOULD HAVE RECORDED PLEDGES FOR ABOUT 94,348 TONS OF FOOD AID FOR LAOS IN RESPONSE TO THE EMERGENCY DROUGHT FOOD AID APPEAL. HE SAID THAT THIS NEARLY MET THE 113,000 TON MINIMUM NEEDS MARK SET IN THE DECEMBER UNDP/LPDR REPORT. THE RESREP SAID THAT HE DID NOT THINK THAT ANY MORE FOOD AID WOULD BE NEEDED BY THE LAO. HE SAID THAT THE UNDP WAS NOW LESS CONCERNED ABOUT HEADING OFF A "FAMINE" THAN IT WAS ABOUT THE PRACTICAL PROBLEM OF RICE DISTRIBUTION. IN RESPONSE TO AN EMBASSY OFFICER'S QUESTION, THE RESREP SAID THAT HE BELIEVED THAT THE LAO NO LONGER REQUIRED US FOOD AID.

2. THE RESREP SAID THAT HE FEARED THAT THE LAO WOULD BE UNABLE TO ABSORB EFFECTIVELY THE AID IT HAD ALREADY BEEN PROMISED. HE SAID THAT THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAM, THEREFORE, HAD DELAYED \$8 MILLION OF RICE AID WHICH MIGHT POSSIBLY HAVE BEEN GIVEN TO THE LAO AS PART OF THE WFP'S REGULAR "FOOD FOR WORK" PROGRAM DURING 1978. HE SAID THAT IF THIS \$8 MILLION WAS TO BE USED TO BUY RICE DURING 1978, THEN THE LAO WOULD HAVE TO IMPORT AND DISTRIBUTE OVER 126,000 TONS OF RICE, THIS AMOUNT WOULD BE WELL OVER WHAT THE LAO HAD SAID THEIR MINIMUM NEEDS WERE.

3. ANOTHER UNDP OFFICIAL SAID THAT HIS OFFICE HAD
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LEARNED THAT ABOUT 1000,000 TONS OF RICE WAS BEING STORED IN MUKDAHAN, THAILAND, UNTIL IT COULD BE FERRIED ACROSS TO SAVANNAKHET AND THAT THIS WAS BEING DONE VERY SLOWLY. HE SAID THAT IN ABOUT SIX MONTHS THIS RICE WOULD START TO SPOIL, AND HE WAS AFRAID THAT IF THE WASTAGE WERE PUBLICIZED THE UN WOULD BE EMBARRASSED.

4. THE SAME OFFICIAL SAID THAT THE UNDP HAD COLLECTED VARYING REPORTS ON THE RATE THAT RICE COULD BE FERRIED DAILY FROM MUKDAHAN TO SAVANNAKHET, ALSO REPORTED IN REF A. HE SAID THAT HE DID NOT THINK THE UNDP/LPDR DECEMBER REPORT ESTIMATE OF 600 TONS A DAY OR THE UN BANGKOK'S RECENT ESTIMATION OF 100 TONS PER DAY WERE CORRECT. INSTEAD HE FAVORED A DUTCH OFFICIAL'S ESTIMATE OF 360 TONS PER DAY. THIS FIGURE IS SUPPORTED BY CONSULATE UDORN'S REPORT THAT THAI SOURCES CLAIMED 300 TO 400 TONS OF RICE COULD BE FERRIED DAILY (REF B).

5. THE UNDP AND THE LAO GOVERNMENT OFFICIALLY REPORTED THAT AS OF APRIL 1, 1978, THE FOLLOWING COUNTRIES HAD PLEDGED OR GIVEN FOOD AID DIRECTLY AND BILATERALLY:
SWEDEN 7,380 TONS OF RICE, 3,200 TONS OF WHEAT, 400

TONS OF FISH, AND 280 TONS OF VEGETABLE OIL; THE NETHER-
LANDS 13,700 TONS OF RICE; AUSTRALIA 2,000 TONS OF
RICE; INDIA 1,000 TONS OF RICE; BURMA 300 TONS OF RICE;
AND THAILAND 150 TONS OF RICE. THE WORLD FOOD PRO-
GRAM HAD DONATED 16,073 TONS OF RICE AND WOULD CHANNEL
FOOD AID FROM THE FOLLOWING NATIONS: THE UNITED KING-
DOM 6,000 TONS OF WHEAT; NORWAY 4,500 TONS OF RICE; AND
DENMARK 3,600 TONS OF RICE. THE UNHCR HAD PROVIDED
2,000 TONS OF RICE AND WOULD CHANNEL TO THE LAO 2,500
TONS OF RICE FROM THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY AND
565 TONS OF RICE FROM CARITAS. UNICEF WOULD PROVIDE

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9164

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY

AMCONSUL UDORN

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 VIENTIANE 0405

BANGKOK ALSO PASS UDORN ELECTRICALLY

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

900 TONS OF WHEAT AND 1,650 TONS OF MILK POWDER,
CEREALS, AND BUTTER. UNICEF WOULD ALSO CHANNEL TO THE
LAO 250 TONS OF FISH FROM CANADA AND 400 TONS OF RICE
FROM SWITZERLAND. THE UNDP REPORTED THAT ANOTHER
20,000 TONS WOULD BE DONATED BY "OTHERS". THE UNDP
RESREP SAID THAT "OTHERS" WAS AID MOSTLY FROM COMMUNIST
COUNTRIES BUT THAT HE COULD NOT ITEMIZE IT BECAUSE
THOSE GOVERNMENTS HAD NOT YET OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCED THE
AID. HE SAID THAT THIS "OTHERS" CATEGORY ALSO INCLUDED
SOME FRENCH FOOD AID BUT THAT IT WAS ALSO AS YET UN-

OFFICIAL.

6. COMMENT: THE UNDP RESREP' INFORMATION WOULD INDICATE THAT THESE OTHER, NON-U.S. DONORS HAD SUBSTANTIALLY MET OR WERE ABOUT TO MEET LAO REQUIREMENTS FOR FOOD AID
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DURING 1978. ASSUMING THAT WE CAN OBTAIN A FORMAL CONFIRMATION OF THIS CONCLUSION FROM THE LAO, THE UNDP, AND FROM THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAM IN ROME, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THE LAO DROUGHT EMERGENCY ANNOUNCED LAST JANUARY HAD BEEN SUCCESSFULLY COUNTERED AND THAT U.S. EMERGENCY AID WAS NO LONGER NEEDED.

7. THIS IS GOOD NEWS FROM THE HUMANITARIAN AND REFUGEE-PREVENTION STANDPOINT. WE CAN ALSO SEE THAT IT WILL EASE CERTAIN PROBLEMS IN WASHINGTON WITH RESPECT TO CONGRESS AND DOMESTIC U.S. PUBLIC OPINION. NEVERTHELESS, FROM THE LIMITED AND ADMITTEDLY PAROCHIAL VIEWPOINT OF EMBASSY VIENTIANE, THIS APPARENT LAO SUCCESS IN DEALING WITH THEIR DROUGHT EMERGENCY WITHOUT U.S. AID MAKES PROBLEMS FOR US. THE LAO HAVE RECEIVED A CLEAR SIGNAL THAT, AS DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER NOUPHAN SAID TO ME ON MARCH 16 (VIENTIANE 350), THE U.S. IS NOT INTERESTED IN THE LPDR. THE LAO MAY FEEL THAT THEY HAVE ALSO RECEIVED A CLEAR INDICATION THAT THEY DO NOT NEED PARTICULARLY CLOSE RELATIONS WITH THE U.S., OR POSSIBLY EVEN ANY RELATIONS AT ALL. THIS SITUATION, COUPLED WITH OUR NEW APPARENT STATUS AS THE LEADING BUGBEAR BEHIND THE LAO INSURGENCY (VIENTIANE 0377), WOULD INDICATE THAT OUR POLICY OF TRYING TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH THE FORMER INDOCHINA COUNTRIES HAS RECEIVED YET ANOTHER SETBACK IN THE WAKE OF THE HUMPHREY-HUONG ESPIONAGE CASE.

8. ACTION REQUESTED: IN AN EFFORT TO LIMIT ANY BAD EFFECTS THIS TURN OF EVENTS MIGHT HAVE ON OUR INDOCHINA NORMALIZATION POLICY, THE EMBASSY RECOMMENDS THAT WE BE AUTHORIZED TO SEEK A FORMAL JUDGMENT FROM THE UNDP THAT THE DROUGHT EMERGENCY IN LAOS HAD BEEN SUCCESSFULLY
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COUNTERED. WE ALSO RECOMMEND THAT EMBASSY ROME BE ASKED TO SEEK A SIMILAR JUDGMENT FROM FAO/WFP. WITH THE RESULTS OF THESE DEMARCHES IN HAND, WE WOULD THEN SEEK AN APPOINTMENT TO CONSULT WITH THE LAO FOREIGN MINISTRY.

WE WOULD POINT OUT THAT WE HAD GIVEN THE LAO REQUEST
FULL CONSIDERATION BUT HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO COME TO ANY
DECISION. IN THE MEANTIME, WE HAD BEEN INFORMED THAT
OTHER DONORS HAD SUBSTANTIALLY MET LAO 1978 EMERGENCY
FOOD REQUIREMENTS AND THAT ANY ADDITIONAL SHIPMENTS
WOULD PROBABLY CAUSE STORAGE AND DISTRIBUTION PROBLEMS
FOR THE LPDR. UNLESS WE RECEIVE A NEW APPEAL BASED ON
NEW INFORMATION FROM THE LAO, WE WOULD ACCORDINGLY
ASSUME THAT THE LPDR'S JANUARY APPEAL HAD BEEN SUCCESS-
FUL AND THAT THERE WAS THUS NO LONGER ANY NEED FOR THE
U.S. TO CONTINUE CONSIDERING THE LAO REQUEST.
ROBERTS

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